



Public Safety – Hiring Process Inquiry: Doña Ana Sheriff's Office

An audit of the hiring process for public safety offices within Doña Ana County was conducted as a special assignment. This audit focused on evaluating hiring procedures for the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office (DASO), to assess the efficiency of current hiring practices. The audit evaluated DASO's process for acquiring new hires for the period of January 1, 2023 through May 31, 2023.

NOTE: No internal promotions occurred during the audit period under review for non-administrative positions. Thus, the hiring process for internal promotions was not evaluated.

The following procedures were performed:

- Acquired hiring data for all new hires (Officer Trainees) for the period under review
- Obtained both Human Resources (HR) and DASO validation of hiring data
- Divided the hiring process into manageable phases or timeframes to identify areas of efficiency/inefficiency – See **Audit Focus**
- Evaluated attrition rates within each hiring phase

Audit Focus

DASO recruitment responsibilities include the following steps:

- 1 - Date department notified HR of position vacancy to date job was posted
- 2 - Date of application submission to date department contacted qualified applicants
- 3 - Date of interview to date of delivery of recruitment packet to HR
- 5 - Date of receipt of compensation offer from HR to date contingent job offer made to applicant

Human Resources responsibilities include the following:

- 4 - Date recruitment packet delivered to HR to date compensation offer emailed to department

An in-depth analysis was conducted of the hiring process to 1) evaluate the time necessary for completion of pertinent steps, and 2) determine compliance with the applicable hiring protocols.

Audit Objectives

The audit objective was to review hiring timeframes for the period under review, in an effort to identify and address areas that could be made more efficient. The internal auditor corresponded with DASO's Sheriff, Major, Recruiting Coordinator, and the Human Resources Administrator to verify data accuracy and completeness, and review the duties they performed in the hiring of 10 Officer Trainee applicants (new hires) who started positions during the period under review.

Observations, Department Input, Recommendations, Conclusion, & Addendum

1. Date Job Posting Requested to Date Job is Posted

Observation(s): This process is initiated via the iCIMS software by DASO, requiring authorization from Human Resources and Finance consecutively. This was consistently a three-work-day process.

DASO Input: *None required.*

Human Resources Input: *Non-applicable; this is a DASO responsibility.*

Recommendations: The current hiring protocol - *DASO Detailed Hiring Process Memorandum (July 2023)* - should be updated, requiring each signing department to complete their authorizations within 24 – 48 hours of iCIMS notification. In addition, DASO management should ensure that there is a designee in the event of an absence to avoid delays in processing.

Conclusion: The Audit finds the three-work-day period noted to be both consistent and reasonable.

2. Date Application Submitted to Date Department Determined Applicant Eligibility

Observation(s): Results indicated that completion of this process ranged from 7 to 22 working days.

DASO Input: Since the audit period under review, DASO has added temporary staff to assist the Recruiting Coordinator in contacting qualified applicants in a more timely manner.

Human Resources Input: *Non-applicable; this is a DASO responsibility.*

Recommendations: The Audit recommends, and DASO management agrees with, setting a goal of contacting qualified Officer Trainee applicants within five working days of application submission. If staff anticipates missing this timeline, a supervisor should be notified in advance so that more application screening resources can be tasked for assistance.

Conclusion: Qualified Officer Trainee applicants should be contacted within five working days of application submission.

Auditor's Note: An evaluation of the steps above indicate that DASO had lost 24% of its *Officer Trainee* applicants during this time period. Before the interview date in the next section, statistics indicate that DASO would lose 78% of its original *Officer Trainee* applicants.

3. Date of Interview to Date Background Check Completed

Observation(s): This inquiry revealed the time between the completions of interviews until completed recruitment packets were delivered to Human Resources, to be as few as 20 to as many as 45 working days.

DASO Input: During the hiring process a candidate must complete the following eight steps prior to the employment packet being delivered to Human Resources - 1) Physical Agility Test, 2) Written Test, 3) Interview Panel, 4) Eye Detection [Polygraph], 5) Back Ground Investigation, 6) *Medical Evaluation², 7) *Psychological Evaluation², and 8) Command Review.

DASO would run these eight processes in a consecutive pattern requiring the candidate to successfully complete one step before moving on to the next step. However, this was found to be very wasteful in time and delayed the hiring of eligible candidates. DASO has since -

- 1) moved from monthly to the bi-monthly testing of applicants,
- 2) contracted out background investigations to decrease completion times for candidate packets,
- 3) implemented and shared with Human Resources, new hiring processes (see Addendum below), which have recently resulted in the successful hire of two eligible candidates in less than 70 days (approximately 40 working days).

* Human Resources does not require the completion of this step prior to the delivery of recruitment packets.

Human Resources Input: HR has provided all public safety departments with a checklist of required data for employment packets. Following this checklist should reduce incidents of missing information, which require packets to be sent back to the department for updates. Information Discovery Services (IDS) is a contractor (third-party vendor) now utilized by DASO to deliver the required applicant data within 15 – 30 calendar days, in a consistent, professional, and complete report. However, use of a third-party vendor brings with it additional statutory requirements to which DASO must adhere to remain compliant with the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Recommendations: The Audit recommends that DASO management employ the following guidelines:

- 1) Adhere to the Human Resources checklist to ensure packet completeness;
- 2) Recruiting personnel should verify reference contacts while with applicants, ensuring that applicants submit a listing of job references in the desired detail and hierarchy (with current contacts), informing them that outdated references could greatly delay the hiring process; and
- 3) With a continued use of the current contractor, DASO should
 - a) take the additional steps necessary to ensure of compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act, and
 - b) set an initial submission of recruitment packet delivery to HR within 30 working days.

Conclusion: This phase of the hiring process can take the greatest amount of time, however the recommendations above should result in completion of this process within 30 working days.

Auditor's Note: Audit analyses indicated that DASO had lost 91% of its original *Officer Trainee* applicants by the time this process was completed.

4. Date Packet Delivered to HR to Date HR Rendered Compensation Offer

Observation(s): Human Resources may respond to the department in 1 working day or take up to 14 working days to render a final compensation offer.

DASO Input: *Non-applicable; this is a Human Resources responsibility.*

Human Resources Input: Human Resources notes the completeness versus incompleteness of background checks as a reason for the time fluctuations in this phase of the hiring process. Incomplete background packets have to be returned to DASO for updates, thereby extending the time needed to complete this phase of the hiring process. In addition, there are occasions wherein background investigation results compel Human Resources to request that DASO management reconsider the hiring of certain applicants. This reconsideration period has at times, elongated this phase of the hiring process.

Recommendations: When it comes to the completeness of recruitment and background packets, DASO should both adhere to the HR checklist and conduct a quality control review before remitting packets to Human Resources.

The Audit recommends for Human Resources that when concerns of applicant suitability occur, in lieu of having the department undergo a reconsideration period, 1) immediately implement the practice of conveying concerns in writing to the department, and then 2) remit a memo for signature, wherein the department acknowledges receipt of HR concerns.

Conclusion: This phase of the hiring process should be completed within three to five working days.

5. Date HR Rendered Compensation Estimate to Date of Job Offer

Observation(s): This phase of the hiring process can occur within 3 days or take up to 18 working days to complete. The P1 approval process requires six signatures/approvals via iCIMS.

DASO Input: This final approval process requires signatures from the Sheriff, Human Resources Information Systems Specialist, Human Resources Administrator, Human Resources Director, Budget & Research Officer or Finance Director, and the County Manager. Per DASO, priority should be to extend the contingent offer once a candidate is heading into the background investigation phase of the hiring process. However this is a matter that would need to be agreed upon with the Human Resources Department.

Human Resources Input: While DASO initiates this process, Human Resources also has approval responsibilities.

Recommendations: The Audit recommends that the hiring protocol direct a two to three working day timeframe to complete this process, requiring notification of DASO management in each event wherein this deadline is not met. Management in each applicable department should

ensure that a secondary designee is identified for each of the required approvals to prevent delays in the event the primary approver is unavailable.

Conclusion: Because this is an all-digital process wherein all county signatories are notified via computer, it should be completed within two to three working days.

Period of Time from Job Interview to Job Offer

The internal auditor deemed the period between the job interview until receipt of a contingent job offer as a most critical time period for determining if the County would actually acquire the sought-after talent or lose out on the recruitment opportunity. Analyses indicated that DASO could notify a perspective candidate with a job offer in as little as 43 total calendar days after an interview, or take as long as 104 total calendar days to make such an offer.

DASO protocol currently requires applicants to manually fill out a 32-paged paper Personnel Information Questionnaire (PIQ). A paper checklist is used to record pass or fail scores for applicants. The use of paper documentation in both cases can be inefficient. Thus, the Audit recommends that DAC Senior-level Management provide the option of digital PIQ and checklist documents.¹

Conclusion

While each phase of the hiring process is designed to eliminate those who are not qualified to serve as Officer Trainees, implementation of the recommendations above should allow for a higher retention of qualified Officer Trainee applicants. If estimated timeframes are to be met, all involved personnel must consistently comply with approved hiring protocols². Both DASO and Human Resources understand current processes and time requirements and should revisit the current hiring protocols concerning any required adjustments, as applicable, and thereafter on at least an annual basis.

In comparing current estimated hiring timelines with institutions comparable to DASO, the following hiring timeframes are reported:

Sandoval County Sheriff's Department:	38 - 40 total calendar days
Luna County Sheriff's Department:	40 – 65 total calendar days
Santa Fe County Sheriff's Department:	Data Unavailable: Extended Recruitment
Eddy County Sheriff's Department:	90 - 92 total calendar days.
Las Cruces Police Department:	60 - 120 total calendar days
NMSU Police Department:	120 - 150 total calendar days
DASO:	60 – 120 total calendar days
*Integrity HR	90 – 120 total calendar days
Audit recommended timelines:	60 – 70 total calendar days

* Integrity HR conducted a diagnostic audit of DAC's Human Resources function in 2019, citing the typical range of time needed to fill vacant positions.

NOTE: Neither volume of applicants nor staffing levels of departments were considered in the comparison above.

¹ - A discussion with the Information Technology Director resulted in the following options to consider for the PIQ (not applicable to the checklist):

- The use of a SharePoint site,
- Password protection of documents, or
- Provide an FTP site or web portal wherein applicants access our site and upload documents as necessary.

This both ensures that only the applicants make necessary updates, and enforces information security, allowing for shorter turnaround periods to make updates/corrections. Such precautions may not be needed for the digitized checklist.

ADDENDUM

DASO leadership shared the following recent changes/modifications to their hiring process to improve the efficiency of its operations:

- Contracted with a company to do employment background investigations (May 2023).
- Contracted with a psychologist to do pre-employment testing on DASO's schedule (July 2023).
- Contracted with a Human Resources (HR) consultant to interface with County HR (October 2023).
- We conduct our internal testing like the physical agility test, medical and psychological (to be done sooner) at the outset upon receiving applications (May 2023)². When they pass the various processes we have moved far quicker to get them on board.
- We now use any one of the other 10 satellite academies in the state as usually they are running routinely throughout the year (July 2023). We used to only conduct one academy annually.
- All interface with HR now goes only through the Sheriff in preparation for our HR consultant to take over as soon as our contract is composed and sent to procurement (July 2023).

NOTE: A review of the dates of implementation for the changes above revealed that these changes would not have affected the current audit period under review.

² The Audit notes that management is aware of the risk (of incurred expenses) that a candidate may not pass other required tests in order to progress successfully through the remainder of the hiring process.

Final Audit Recommendation: Based upon correspondences between DASO and Human Resources concerning updates implemented in the **Addendum**, the Audit recommends that DASO collaborate with Human Resources to finalize a mutually agreed upon hiring manual. This should include a revision of Step 4 of the Uncertified Cadet, Certified Lateral, and Court Security Hires sections of the current *DASO Detailed Hiring Process Memorandum*.

ATTACHMENTS

DASO Detailed Hiring Process Memorandum

DASO Recruitment Process Analysis

 31 October 2023
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